

## **Section A-2**

### **Family Readiness Groups (FRG)**

The contents of this Toolkit have been developed to assist you in your efforts to support family readiness. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information provided is current and accurate. However, because statutory and regulatory changes may have occurred since the publication of this Toolkit, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs cannot assume responsibility for its continued accuracy. Before taking any significant action based on the contents of this Toolkit, you should contact a subject matter expert in your chain of command to secure the most current information.

## **Family Readiness Group (FRG)**

### **Volunteer Training**

A critical element of any volunteer program is training. Volunteers who understand how to do their job and have the information they need to carry out their volunteer tasks are more likely to feel comfortable and confident in their volunteer roles. Well-trained volunteers are thus more likely to continue to contribute and to encourage others to contribute as well. Additionally, well-trained volunteers are less likely to make mistakes or misrepresent facts.

Effective training is no accident, but rather the product of careful planning and execution. It's important for training to be productive, professional, and efficient. Time is a precious commodity for everyone. To reduce the personal impact of training, plan your training in advance and provide training calendars and agendas. To make training more palatable offer free childcare if possible.

Capitalize on the experience and knowledge of your entire family readiness team. Both unit members and volunteers can provide valuable training. Look to your chain of command for other training resources. Don't forget to research community resources that can be used to support training. They are often low cost or free and can provide valuable expertise and information.

Tailor volunteer training to the needs and desires of your volunteers. Review volunteer job descriptions to make sure that essential skills and informational needs are identified. Be sure to ask your volunteers what they believe are their critical training needs. Communication and leadership are popular classes. Volunteer training is not a one-time event. Like unit training, volunteer training should be viewed as a continuous process. Formal classes should be augmented with on-the-job training. Whenever possible, reinforce training by pairing experienced volunteers with new volunteers to serve as coaches and mentors.

Some units sponsor a multitude of topics for FRG members. The momentum for FRG training is even stronger prior to a deployment or extended separation. Topics may include:

- Family crisis response and referral
- Suicide awareness
- Legal information
- FRG organization
- Sponsorship
- Family advocacy
- American Red Cross services
- Computer skills training with web-based communication and Internet resources

- Financial management
- Personnel policies
- Chaplain support services
- Casualty procedures
- Physical security
- Public affairs
- Child care and parenting
- Special needs of teens
- Active listening

For volunteers who are going to take a leadership role such as Ombudsman or FRG Coordinator, training is essential and may be directed towards advising, mentoring, leadership and facilitation skills, team development, information and referral, and crisis intervention. Volunteers have varied educational backgrounds and experience, but an important factor to remember is that their role is not to be a professional counselor or social worker. A basic and essential volunteer role is information and referral; connecting family members to the community and military resources that they need.

The services have well designed training programs for family members to include Family Team Building, Army Family Team Building, Operation Ready, and the Key Volunteer Network. All of them have training modules on the Internet (web site addresses are in the last section of the Toolkit – Resources, Section C-3) that can be used individually or in a classroom environment. Take advantage of the standardized and well-written training modules and presentations. Share your great ideas.

Some services have extensive training programs specifically designed for volunteers ranging from two days to a week. Subject matter experts are brought in to present various topics. The extended training includes role-playing and scenarios that are excellent training models for problem solving. They allow volunteers to see how they would react in certain situations. It's a hands-on approach that has been well received by volunteers.

If at all possible, incorporate training into Family Days and unit events. That provides a good opportunity for unit members and family members to discuss family readiness and share their experiences with other military families. Training is critical for the service members and their military mission. Make training critical for your FRG volunteers. Do not forget the three “C’s” of training. It builds confidence, commitment and cohesion.